

A TRANSCENDENTAL REMEMBRANCE EVENT
IN HONOR OF HIS GRACE URJASVAT DASA
FROM THE ASSEMBLED VAISNAVAS
BROOKLYN, NYC, APRIL 25, 2015
By Bhakta John Jagannatha



Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu asked, "Of all kinds of distress, what is the most painful?" Sri Ramananda Raya replied, "Apart from separation from the devotee of Krsna, I know of no unbearable unhappiness." (*Caitanya-caritamrta, Madhya-lila*, Chapter 8, Verse 248)

On April 25, 2015 there was a gathering of Vaisnavas at the home of Garbhodakasayi Visnu prabhu and Mother Joan in the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York City. The purpose of this meeting was to remember and to celebrate and to pay homage to a very dear disciple of ISKCON Founder Acharya, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada. The devotees joined together to offer their heart-felt obeisances and deep gratitude and to share loving devotional exchanges in honor of His Grace Urjasvat dasa and to show their appreciation for his lifetime of enthusiastic Krishna conscious devotional service.

Urjasvat prabhu touched the lives of so many devotees around the world. He is best known for leading ecstatic, spiritually-surcharged kirtanas in praise of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna. His voice and chanting style is unique and unforgettable. When Urjasvat prabhu is chanting, you do not even have to see him, all you have to do is hear that inimitable voice, and you know who is leading the kirtana. If for some reason you are not in the temple room and you recognize that sweet, one-of-a-kind, transcendental sound vibration, you immediately realize that it is Urjasvat prabhu and you make haste to join in on the always fired-up chanting and dancing that his humble leadership inspires in everyone.

Urjasvat prabhu may no longer be physically present with us but he will always be available to associate with us within our hearts and in our minds as long as we maintain the memories of his nectarean association.



Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur said - “He reasons ill who tells that Vaishnavas die, when thou art living still in sound! The Vaishnavas die to live, and living try to spread the holy name around!”

Urjasvat prabhu spent practically his entire life performing Harinama Sankirtana. He constantly traveled and preached. His life is an example of enthusiastic devotional service. He spread that enthusiasm to chant the Holy Names, to serve the desire of the pure devotee, Srila Prabhupada, and to advance in Krsna consciousness, to everyone he met. Just seeing him reminded you of Krishna. That is the highest praise that there is for a devotee. Whenever and wherever you met him, in whatever the circumstance, you immediately knew that you were in the presence of a Vaisnava, a servant of Lord Vishnu, Krsna. His body was always decorated with tilaka. When you see a devotee decorated that way you are reminded of Krsna and you become purified. He always carried his big bead bag with his japa-mala. Always chanting *Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare*. He was always clean and neat and first class. He was always happy. He was and is an acarya in so many ways. He exhibited so many qualities of the truly surrendered soul.



Nectar of Devotion, Krsna consciousness is all auspicious, Page 7 -

Furthermore, a person engaged in Krishna consciousness, acting in devotional service, can develop all the good qualities that are generally found in the demigods.

It is said by Sukadeva Gosvami in the 5th Canto of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, 18th chapter, 12th verse, "My dear king, persons who have unflinching faith in Krishna and are without any duplicity can develop all the good qualities of the demigods. On account of a devotee's high grade of Krishna consciousness even the demigods like to live with him, and therefore it can be understood that the qualities of the demigods have developed within his body.

Nectar of Instruction, Text 3, Page 37 -

...all good qualities automatically develop in the character of a devotee. No extraneous endeavor is needed. As confirmed by *Srimad Bhagavatam* (5.18.12), all the good qualities of the demigods manifest progressively in one who has developed pure devotional service. Because a devotee is not interested in any material activity, he does not become materially contaminated. He is immediately situated on the platform of transcendental life.



Srimad Bhagavatam, Canto 5, Chapter 18, Text 12 -

*yasyasti bhaktir bhagavaty akincana
sarvair gunais tatra samasate surah
harav abhaktasya kuto mahad-guna
manorathenasati dhavato bahih*

TRANSLATION

All the demigods and their exalted qualities, such as religion, knowledge and renunciation, become manifest in the body of one who has developed unalloyed devotion for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vasudeva. On the other hand, a person devoid of devotional service and engaged in material activities has no good qualities. Even if he is adept at the practice of mystic yoga or the honest endeavor of maintaining his family and relatives, he must be driven by his own mental speculations and must engage in the service of the Lord's external energy. How can there be any good qualities in such a man?

PURPORT

As explained in the next verse, Krsna is the original source of all living entities. This is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gita* (15.7), wherein Krsna says:

*mamaivamso jiva-loke
jiva-bhutih sanatanah
manah sasthanindriyani
prakrti-sthani karsati*

"The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal, fragmental parts. Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind." All living entities are part and parcel of Krsna, and therefore when they revive their original Krsna consciousness, they possess all the good qualities of Krsna in a small quantity. When one engages himself in the nine processes of devotional service (*sravanam kirtanam visnoh smaranam pada-sevanam/ arcanam vandanam dasyam sakhyam atma-nivedanam*), one's heart becomes purified, and he immediately understands his relationship with Krsna. He then revives his original quality of Krsna consciousness.

In the *Adi-lila* of *Caitanya-caritamrta*, Chapter Eight, there is a description of some of the qualities of devotees. For example, Sri Pandita Haridasa is described as being very well-behaved, tolerant, peaceful, magnanimous and grave. In addition, he spoke very sweetly, his endeavors were very pleasing, he was always patient, he respected everyone, he always worked for everyone's benefit, his mind was free of duplicity, and he was completely devoid of all malicious activities. These are all originally qualities of Krsna, and when one becomes a devotee they automatically become manifest. Sri Krsnadasa Kaviraja, the author of *Caitanya-caritamrta*, says that all good qualities become manifest in the body of a Vaisnava and that only by the presence of these good qualities can one distinguish a Vaisnava from a non-Vaisnava. Krsnadasa Kaviraja lists the following twenty-six good qualities of a Vaisnava: (1) He is very kind to everyone. (2) He does not

make anyone his enemy. (3) He is truthful. (4) He is equal to everyone. (5) No one can find any fault in him. (6) He is magnanimous. (7) He is mild. (8) He is always clean. (9) He is without possessions. (10) He works for everyone's benefit. (11) He is very peaceful. (12) He is always surrendered to Krsna. (13) He has no material desires. (14) He is very meek. (15) He is steady. (16) He controls the senses. (17) He does not eat more than required. (18) He is not influenced by the Lord's illusory energy. (19) He offers respect to everyone. (20) He does not desire any respect for himself. (21) He is very grave. (22) He is merciful. (23) He is friendly. (24) He is poetic. (25) He is expert. (26) He is silent.



These transcendental qualities were manifest in Urjasvat prabhu. He was kind to all. He had no enemies. He was truthful, equal to all, without fault. He was magnanimous, mild, clean, unattached to material possessions, etc... He was and is an exemplary devotee of Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai, Sri Sri Radha-Govinda and Their Lordships Sri Jagannatha, Sri Baladeva and Lady Subhadra. He is someone who took up the order of his spiritual master and made it his life and soul, his purpose in life. He engaged all his senses and all his time and all his energy and encouraged everyone to please Guru and Krsna. He attained all of the wonderful qualities mentioned above by performance of such selfless activities in Krsna consciousness.



Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 3, Text 21 -

*yad yad acarati sresthas
tat tad evetaro janah
sa yat pramanam kurute
lokas tad anuvartate*

TRANSLATION

Whatever action is performed by a great man, common men follow in his footsteps. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.

Urjasvat prabhu was a many-sided disciple of Srila Prabhupada. As mentioned above, he was famous for leading ecstatic kirtanas. He was also an excellent cook. He knew the Krsna conscious philosophy backwards and forwards and gave purifying lectures on *Srimad Bhagavatam*, *Caitanya-caritamrta* and *Srimad Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. He was temple president in Puerto Rico and in Trinidad - simultaneously! At one time he was recommended for Sannyasa. When he wasn't chanting Hare Krsna and Gaura Hari Bol and Jai Jagannatha he was immersed in studying parampara literature. In his own words he stated that he prayed daily to Srila Prabhupada to please remove envy from his heart so that he could love Srila Prabhupada more and more. I believe his prayers were successful. We should all follow his example of devotion to Srila Prabhupada and Krsna.



Sri Upadesamrta, Text 4

*dadati pratigrhnati
guhyam akhyati prechati
bhunkte bhojayate caiva
sad-vidham priti-laksanam*

TRANSLATION

Offering gifts in charity, accepting charitable gifts, revealing one's mind in confidence, inquiring confidentially, offering prasada and accepting prasada are the six symptoms of love shared by one devotee and another.

There were so many wonderful devotees in attendance that paid tribute to Urjasvat prabhu. Devotees from so many varied walks of life spent a blissful evening chanting the holy names Hare, Krsna and Rama in kirtana and bhajan. There were some videos of Urjasvat prabhu leading kirtana and giving class. Everyone shared stories of their personal pastimes and enlivening experiences with Urjasvat prabhu. Some of his godbrothers who knew him for many years, Mahavirya and Bhumipati and Bhushara prabhhus, spoke of him in the early days of Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON. Others of our spiritual family who joined after Urjasvat prabhu was already a veteran of many years of service spoke of how they were trained by him and how he was an example of a truly humble, surrendered soul who had full faith in the process of Krsna consciousness. Some devotees were too humble and shy to speak. Some were too overcome with spiritual emotion. He was such a positive influence on the devotional life of everyone present and everyone was honored and grateful to have been blessed to receive his transcendental association.



There was a beautiful altar set up with garlanded deities of Radha-Krsna and Gaura-Nitai. There was a photo of Urjasvat prabhu with a sweet garland also. The evening concluded with a maha kirtana led by Bhushara prabhu while arati was offered to Guru and Krsna and to Urjasvat prabhu by Parvati devi dasi. Of course, at the conclusion of the chanting and dancing, there was a scrumptious prasadam feast prepared by Mahavirya prabhu. All the devotees enjoyed their spiritual senses by honoring Krsna prasada and basking in the afterglow of wonderful sadhu-sanga, Krsna-katha and transcendental glorification of Srila Prabhupada's very dear disciple, His Grace Urjasvat dasa prabhu.

He
reasons
ill
who
says
Vaisnavas
die
when
thou
art
living
still
in
sound!



The
Vaisnavas
die
to
live,
and
living
try
to
spread
the
HOLY
NAME
around!

*vancha-kalpatarubhyas ca krpa-sindhubya eva ca
patitanam pavanebhyo vaisnavebhyo namo namah*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto all the Vaisnava devotees of the Lord, who can fulfill the desires of everyone, just like desire trees, and who are full of compassion for the fallen souls.

GIVING THANKS WHILE I AM STILL HERE

By Bhakta John Jagannatha



I do not claim to have been an intimate associate of his grace Jagat Pate dasa prabhu. I have known him for many years and he was always a friend. It always hits closer to home when someone you know personally passes away, especially when you have been in their company just a day or so prior to their going away. I want to say some things, even though they are very small and insignificant things, because my heart hurts. I know there are others, who knew him better than I, also experiencing the sorrow of separation. There is some shock, some numbness, and the realization that I will also have to leave my body and it could happen anytime and anywhere.

The week before the Manhattan Ratha Yatra Jagat Pate told me that on the day of the parade he consoles himself for missing the parade [he stays at the front desk of the temple] by honoring the whole maha-plate offered to the Deities that day. He also told me that when he would attend the programs for the appearance and disappearance days of his guru that his much younger god-brothers and god-sisters would joke about his age with him, saying things like “Wow, prabhu, you are still here?”

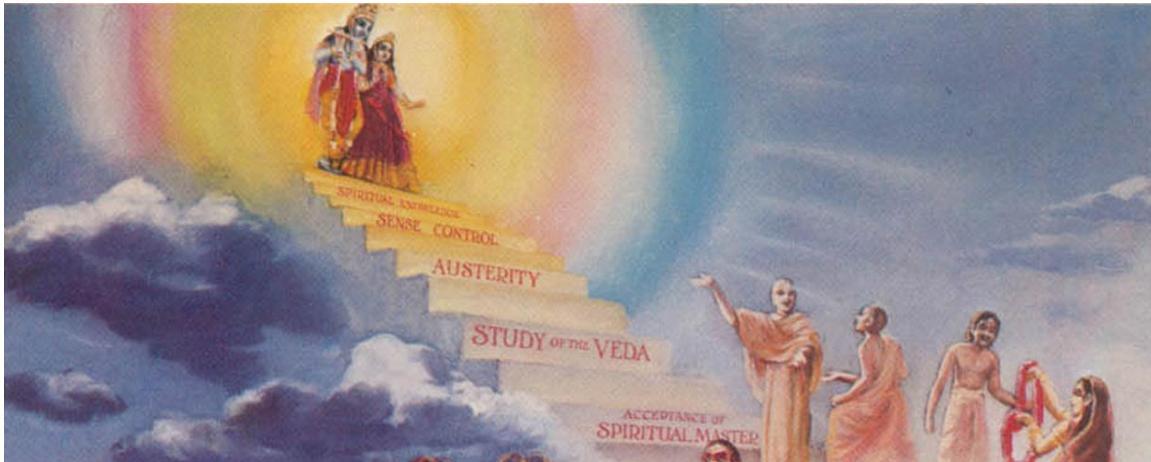
On a Sunday evening a few weeks ago, when there was a special program in Brooklyn in honor of his grace Kurma Rupa dasa prabhu, I left the temple room when they began a video presentation of Kurma Rupa prabhu's main preaching project - Care For Cows. I meant no disrespect but I would rather hear a live person give a lecture than watch a video. That's just me and my lack of attraction for that sort of thing. I would have preferred to listen to someone talking about their personal association and remembrances and realizations concerning such a remarkable Vaisnava. When there is a video presentation everyone just sits there mesmerized and there is no personal interaction - no *sravanam kirtanam* - if you know what I mean. I would have preferred someone reading any one of the published newsletters from Care For Cows, and everyone else hearing, followed by questions and answers. As I have said, that's just me; I guess I am too old school.

I stood outside of the front entrance to Radha Govinda Mandira chanting japa. Jagat Pate prabhu was also there as were one or two other devotees. One devotee remarked that he was falling asleep watching the video presentation so he came outside. Another devotee arrived and asked Jagat Pate what time the prasadam feast would be served. He said it

would be between 8 and 8:30. I spoke up and informed him that it was announced that the feast would be served at 9 because of the special program for the disappearance of Sriman Kurma Rupa prabhu.

Jagat Pate became visibly saddened when I mentioned this. He said Kurma Rupa was such a nice devotee, so humble, and that he was looking for him during the recent Ratha Yatra. Jagat Pate became very somber remembering that Kurma Rupa had just recently left his body. He told me so many nice devotees were leaving and going back to Krsna because they were ready. Then he told me [once again] of his near death experience and how he knew he didn't have much time left and he was determined to be ready when it was his time to go back home.

On the Sunday before he passed away I was sitting in front of the temple in Brooklyn and chanting japa and he was standing nearby talking with another devotee. They were discussing the ways and means of preaching to varieties of persons on different levels of consciousness. A little while later I heard him conversing with another Vaisnava about chanting the holy names - *HARE KRSNA HARE KRSNA KRSNA KRSNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE* - and what was more important - the quantity of rounds chanted or the quality of rounds. When that conversation came to a conclusion, he said hari bol and got into his car and left. That was the last time I saw and heard the prabhu. Just a few days later he was gone.

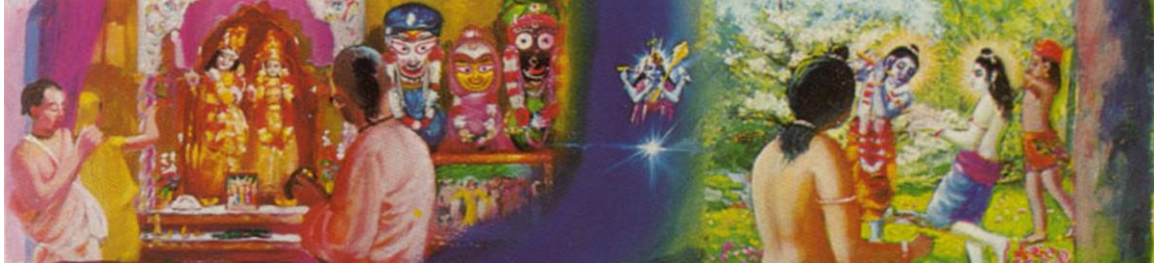


This material body is temporary. It will grow old, get disease and die. I can personally attest to the first two - age and disease. When speaking with Jagat Pate he would touch on those subjects frequently and his realization that his material body was close to the end. I have that same realization and it is more in the forefront of my thoughts each and every day as my body steadily decays and disintegrates.

While I am still here I would like to thank everyone in my life for helping me along the path of Krsna consciousness. I want to thank my family for letting me be who I am - an aspiring Vaisnava. I want to thank the multitude of devotees of Lord Krsna who have helped me. It is too late to thank those who have left their bodies. I knew Urjasvat prabhu and Kurma Rupa prabhu and Jagat Pate prabhu and so many other Vaisnavas who have

gone from our vision but I never took the time to thank them for their kind association and friendship. A short list of those devotees who gave me their association and are now gone away – Puru dasa, Hemanga dasa, Sanjaya dasa, Rupa Sanatana dasa, Jada Bharata dasa, Muchakunda dasa, Lokamangala dasa, Lohitaksa dasa, and Rasajna dasi.

After I wrote an article about a program for the disappearance of Urjasvat prabhu I received an e-mail from a god-uncle. He made the point that it would have been better to have said all those nice things about his god-brother while he was still physically present. I could not agree more.



I could write a list a mile long of everyone still here who helped me on the path of Krsna consciousness. I thank you all from the core of my heart - my grandparents, my parents, my brothers and sister, all my children [Parasurama, Jahnu and Bhakti Rasa] and their spouses, my grandchildren, my former wife Bhaktin Maria Magdalena, my good friend Bhaktin Marta Lee, all my god-brothers and god-sisters and god-aunts and god-uncles and god-cousins. I want to thank for my early training in Krsna consciousness - Niranjana Swami and Damodara dasa in the bhakta program and Visnu Gada prabhu in Radha Govinda's kitchen. I want to thank my god-brothers and god-sisters who have always been so kind to me - Akrura, Partha, Nama-sankirtana, Mahaprabhu, Abhimanyu, Sahadeva, Daruka, Amara, Parvati, and Bhaktin Joan. So many devotees from 340w55 – Sanjaya, Yaduganguli, Kavidatta, Nirantara, Bhumipati, Bhaktivinode, Krsnot Kirtana, Muralivadaka, Adi Kesava, Tattvavit, Laxmi Nrsimha, Romapada, Vakresvara Pandita, Krtā-Krt, Vyasapada, Kesiha, Devarata, Raya Krsna, Janmastami, Ariha, Hamsarupa, Trilokesvara, Sri Gopala, Krsna-nama, Raganuga Bhakti and on and on. There is also Dayananda, Krsna Kumari, Janesvara, Prema Bhakti and Rasaraja. And Rocana dasa and the Sampradaya Sun staff for allowing me this forum to express myself. There are so many more that I haven't mentioned and I thank you all for your loving association and I beg you all please forgive me for all my offenses.

Most of all I give thanks to ISKCON Founder Acharya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada. Without His Divine Grace I would never have come in contact with Vaisnavas in this lifetime. I would never have heard the mahamantra. I would not know of Lord Chaitanya or Lord Jagannatha. I would have no knowledge of the Supreme cause of all causes - the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna. Srila Prabhupada was sent by the Lord to bring us all back to the spiritual sky. Through him, the transcendental transparent via media, I give thanks to the divine couple, Sri Sri Radha Govinda. I also must give thanks to all the Vaisnava saints of the past and in our line of disciplic succession.

I know I am not worthy of being called a Vaisnava. I am not worthy of all the wonderful association I have received. It is the mercy of the Vaisnavas who are full of compassion for the fallen souls like me and it is the causeless mercy of Krsna who has sent all these saintly persons to lead me on the path back to home, back to Godhead.

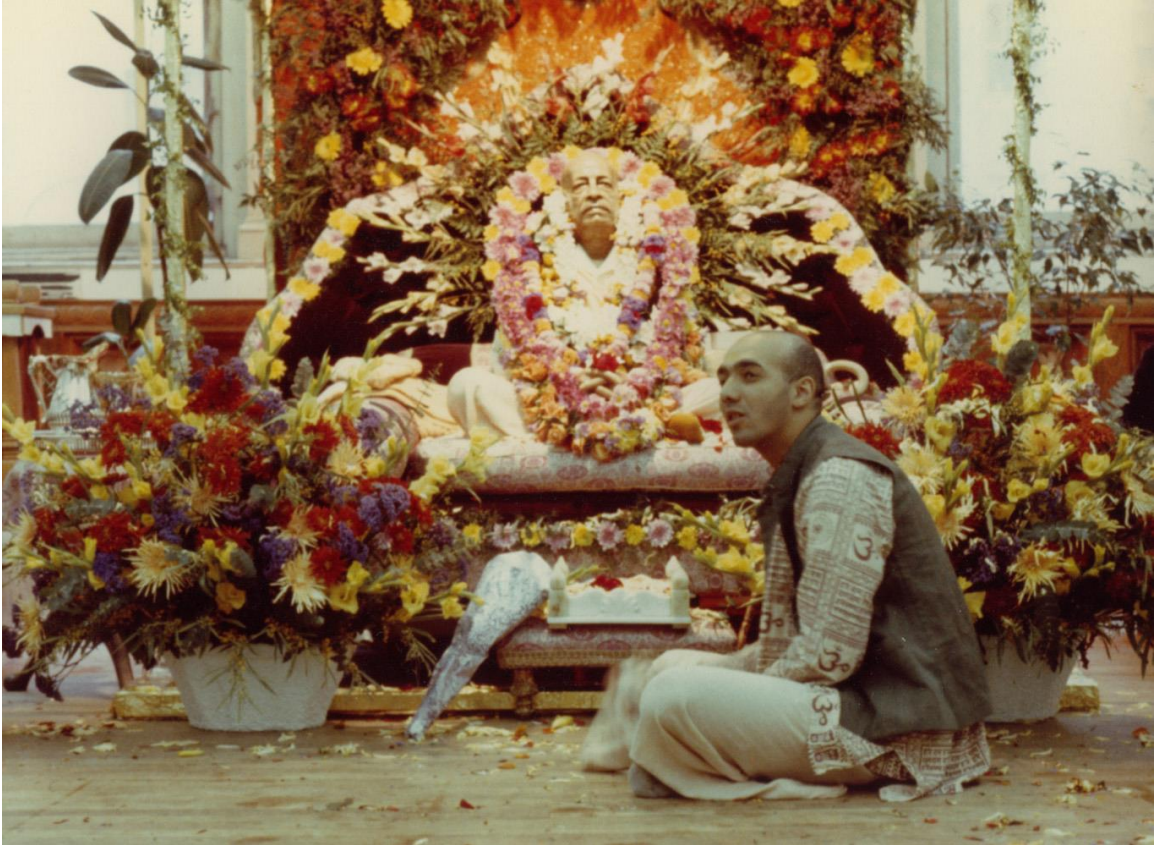


I hope I'm ready when my time here is up. I know I am not worthy but hopefully I will be ready. And if I don't go back to home, back to Godhead, I know I will have the chance in another lifetime. But who wants to wait that long? My one and only humble request is this - when the end comes would some kind-hearted soul please cremate the remains and send them to Jagannatha Puri.

Your eternally grateful servant, Bhakta John Jagannatha



SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF AN ASPIRING VAISNAVA
H.G. AKRURA DASA BRAHMACARI
A TRUE FRIEND AND GODBROTHER
By Bhakta John Jagannatha



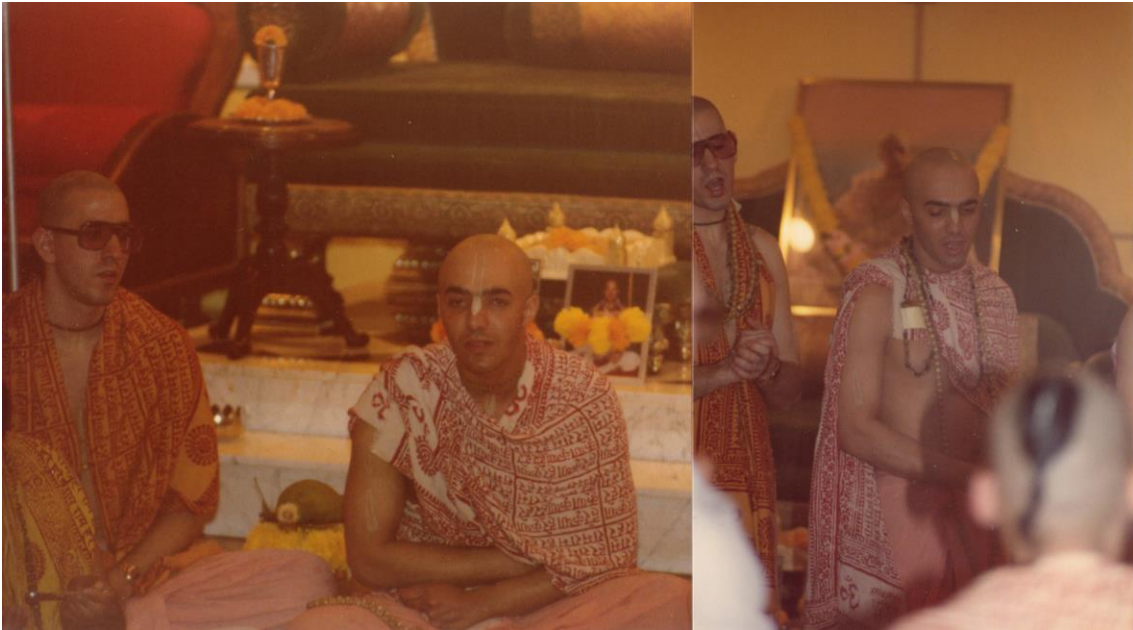
In the transcendental words of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu; “Anyone who takes to devotional service is exalted...”

At the recent New York City Ratha Yatra I heard the sad words that a friend and godbrother had left his body.

His Grace Akrura dasa brahmachari received diksa and brahminical initiations from Satsvarupa dasa Goswami in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s. He was the younger brother of His Grace Lokamangala dasa brahmacari (ACBSP), the well-known ISKCON devotee actor famous for his wonderful portrayals of King Kamsa and Ravana. Their mother was a regular at the Free Sunday Love feasts.

The following is a humble attempt to offer the devotees the opportunity to see through Akrura prabhu’s eyes and how he was seen by others while he was still here with us. The overall majority of photos included herein was taken by Akrura prabhu or otherwise were part of his personal photo collection.

I apologize for not having information on the names and places of most of the photos taken in India and elsewhere. I am sure there are many Vaisnavas who will be able to identify persons and places better than I.



Diksa Initiation April 1979



Diksa Initiation April 1979



Working on Lord Jagannatha's carts



With Varnashrama dasa (SDG)



With Ghanashyama dasa (SDG)





With Satsvarupa dasa Goswami and Damodara dasa (SDG)



Akrura's elder brother HG Lokamangala dasa (ACBSP)
2nd from left and 3rd from right

Akrura Prabhu's Photos of His 1981 Pilgrimage to India





His Grace Akrura Prabhu in Jagannatha Puri



Mahaprabhu dasa (SDG) and Divyalila dasa (SDG)







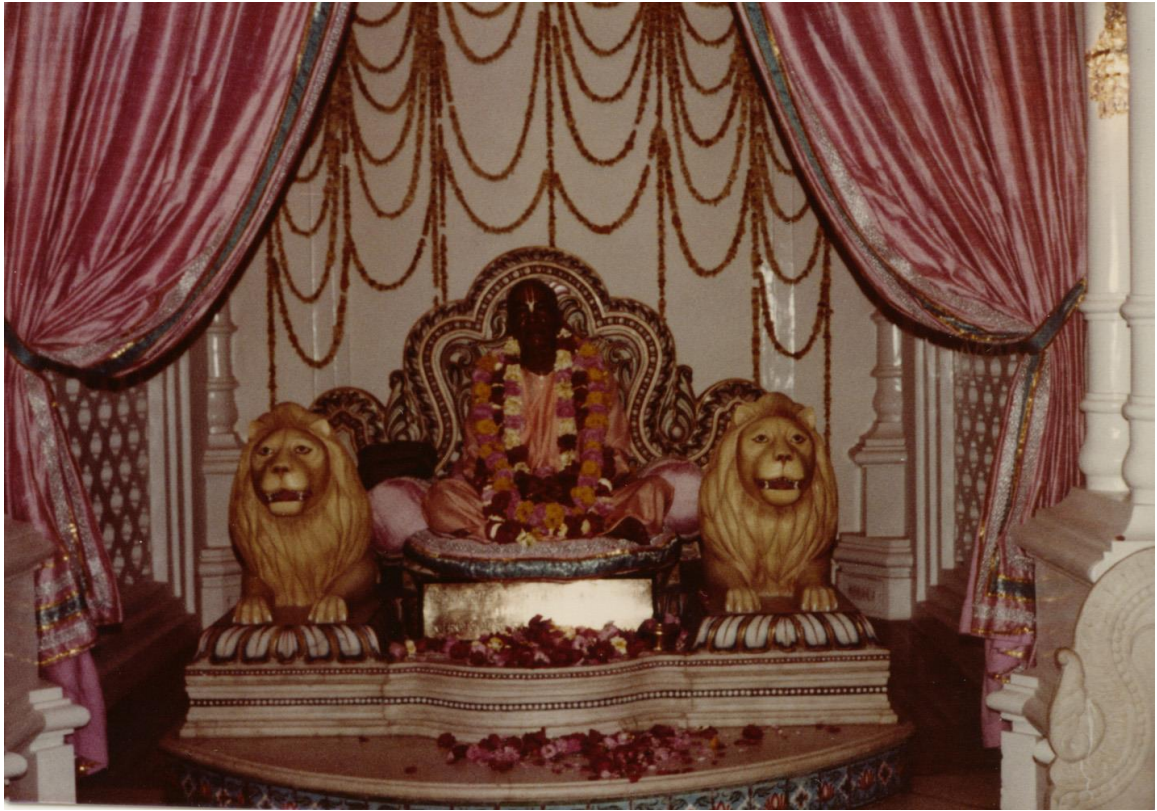






















*krsnasyoccaiḥ pranaya-vasatīḥ preyasibhyo 'pi radha
kundam casya munibhir abhitas tadrg eva vyadhai
yat presthair apy alam asulabham kimpunar bhakti-bhajam
tat premedam sakrd api sarah snatur aviskaroti*

Translation:

Of the many objects of favored delight and of all the lovable damsels of Vrajabhumi, Srimati Radharani is certainly the most treasured object of Krsna's love. And, in every respect, Her divine kunda is described by great sages as similarly dear to Him.

Undoubtedly Radha-kunda is very rarely attained even by the great devotees; therefore it is even more difficult for ordinary devotees to attain. If one simply bathes once within those holy waters, one's pure love of Krsna is fully aroused.

(Sri Upadesamrta, Text 11)

Partial Purport:

Why is Radha-kunda so exalted? The lake is so exalted because it belongs to Srimati Radharani, who is the most beloved object of Sri Krsna. Among all the *gopis*, She is the most beloved. Similarly, Her lake, Sri Radha-kunda, is also described by great sages as the lake that is as dear to Krsna as Radha Herself. Indeed, Krsna's love for Radha-kunda and Srimati Radharani is the same in all respects...

It is stated that a devotee will at once develop pure love of Krsna in the wake of the *gopis* if he once takes a bath in Radha-kunda...



Akrura prabhu gifted this piece of Radha-kunda tilaka to me from his 1981 pilgrimage

A Visit to Akrura Prabhu's Home in March 2008 [with my journal entries for that day].



Akrura prabhu greets me at the train station in the Bronx



“It’s only six miles, prabhu.”

Today March 20, 2008

I went to Akrura's today.

I got there at about 10 am and we went for a 6 mile walk. Then we went to his apt. I got darshan of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai and Their Lordships Jagannatha, Baladeva and Lady Subhadra. Akrura prabhu prepared some bhoga and gave me the honor of offering to the Deities and then we took with relish some baked potato, eggplant parmesan, green salad and blueberry halavah. After, we looked at his devotional photos which he allowed me to take home with me to scan. We spoke Krishna katha for a few hours and then I took the train home.



Akrura prabhu's Gaura Nitai Deities

Akrura said -

When I visited Akrura prabhu he told me it took him a long time to surrender. He would visit the Henry Street temple where Lokamangala (his brother) lived and not take prasadam at all. When the devotees would try to put tilak on his forehead when he entered the temple, as was the custom at that time, (What happened to that custom?) he would avoid them. He had many chances to see Prabhupada but would not go to see him because he was afraid that if Prabhupada looked him in the eyes he would become a devotee. He told me of working on the first NY Ratha Yatra carts. He would go from 9am to 9pm everyday for so many weeks. He received no pay but he loved to go everyday and do devotional service. He served with Jayananda prabhu and Damodara prabhu and Jivadhara prabhu and others. He would sometimes drive a fork lift. He said he couldn't wait to get up in the morning and help build Lord Jagannatha's chariots.

He told me that Niranjana prabhu would ask him again and again to stay overnight but for years he would refuse. Until one day Niranjana prabhu told him that this was the last time he would ask him and Akrura prabhu finally said yes. He told me how Bhagavatananda prabhu would come to the restaurant and buy prasadam and sit on the floor in the middle of the restaurant wearing his wild clothes and big afro and chant mantras over the prasadam and Akrura prabhu would have to gently convince him to please sit at a table like everyone else. He told me of having to kick out K dasa and A dasa for stealing

money from the restaurant. How he became like a madman, he was so upset that they would steal from Krishna, that in spite of both those devotees having experience with martial arts, and at great risk to his own well being, he was fearless and got in their faces and made them leave immediately.



Akrura prabhu's Deities of Lord Jagannatha, Lord Baladeva and Lady Subhadra



Godbrothers and Godsisters



Manhattan Ratha Yatra 5th Avenue

Dear Devotees,

Soon all of us will leave this temporal reality. We are all individual spirit souls with unique personalities. Although some individuals tend to be alone it does not necessarily mean they are anti-social. Please don't forget your friends, old and new, and loved ones. No matter how near or far. Please send some transcendental sound vibrations their way. With the exception of Guru and Krsna in the heart, Akrura prabhu was alone when he left his body.

NO ONE, ESPECIALLY AN ASPIRING VAISNAVA, SHOULD LEAVE THEIR BODY ALONE, IN ANONIMITY, BEREFT OF ANY DEVOTIONAL ASSOCIATION. IT'S NOT MERCIFUL. WE ARE STRIVING FOR MERCY FOR ALL THE CONDITIONED SOULS. ISN'T IT? SHAME ON ME FOR NOT STAYING IN TOUCH.

On a very personal note; the two persons on this planet who knew me better than anyone, are both gone from here. The only two persons that slept peacefully by my side, and I theirs, are gone. First, Akrura and I slept side by side in our sleeping bags for months in the Bhakta program in 340 West 55th Street. Second, Mother Maria and I slept side by side for years in our marriage. I won't see them here anymore.

I am not saying I was Akrura's best or closest god-brother and friend. He was my best friend/god-brother. We shared trips to Gita Nagari Ratha Yatras over the years. He

visited my home in Queens and I visited his home in the Bronx. He was a kind uncle to my sons.

We last associated at the 2015 New York Ratha Yatra. We sat together on the grass in Washington Square Park and honored Jagannatha prasadam and it was just like it always was – Krsna Katha – funny and serious and a transcendently happy place to be.

I am so sad that both loved ones have disappeared. So sad. I am so happy that both loved ones are possibly closer now, if not there already, to the Kingdom of God. So happy.

*satatam kirtayanto mam
yatantas ca drdha-vratah
namasyantas ca mam bhaktya
nitya-yukta upasate*

Translation:

Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion.

(Bhagavad-gita, As It Is, Chapter 9, Text 14)

THE END OF SADHU SANGA

AT THE SRI SRI KRISHNA BALARAMA MANDIR IN QUEENS, NYC?

By Bhakta John Jagannatha



Their Lordships Sri Sri Hari-Haladhari

In my current series on the former Maha temple at 340 West 55th Street I have been trying to record for posterity some of the enlivening and spiritually purifying Krsna conscious pastimes of the previous century. Some may consider it ancient history. It was sad and disturbing when I went to visit there after being away for only two years and was greeted by hand trucks and forklifts carrying out pieces of furniture and fixtures from an empty building.

The Deities and the devotees were gone.

That was there and then.

This is here and now.

I had the opportunity in recent weeks to spend some time in Krsna conscious association with the devotees of the Vaisnava temple in the Richmond Hill section of Queens known as the Sri Sri Krsna Balarama Mandir. Specifically I attended the program of

abhishekam, bhajan, kirtan, bhakti yoga discourse and a free sumptuous prasadam feast on the auspicious appearance day of Lord Nrsimhadeva and the following week I attended the Free Sunday Love Feast program.

Prior to those two transcendental engagements I had the pleasure of speaking with the founder and temple president, his grace Sunandana dasa prabhu. I spent some hours with the prabhu over the course of a few days discussing different topics, such as our completely different beginnings in devotional life. While I was contacted over and over and refused to surrender, he was praying over and over for the opportunity to surrender. That is a very telling indication of what is in our hearts. He was blessed by Srila Prabhupada to accomplish so much in his short time on this planet while I have produced nothing of consequence in the service of His Divine Grace. We also exchanged views on the past and present situation in ISKCON in general, and the Queens temple in particular, and the future of both.

Sunandana prabhu requested that I write something to promote the temple in Queens. Anyone who has had the misfortune to come across one of my articles would rightfully ask why? He could have thrown a pebble in any direction and hit a more qualified person to advance this cause. The reason he asked me is the same reason that he has been successful in Queens. His only purpose in life is to please Guru and Gauranga. Their transcendental service is his heart and soul. To that end it is his purpose in life to engage everyone in dovetailing their individual propensities in devotional service. He recognized that I have a desire to write, so he is engaging me in writing something about Sri Sri Hari-Haladhari and the Vaisnava community serving Their Lordships.

I have zero humility and even less qualification so I must beg for the mercy of the Vaisnavas, who are like desire trees, so that what is written here may please them and Srila Prabhupada and Their Lordships Sri Sri Hari-Haladhari, and have an overall positive spiritual effect.

So let me begin with the origins and some significant historic events. I have collected some articles on Sri Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir from the internet so everyone may get a small taste of the pastimes of this place of pilgrimage.

The Krishna Balarama Temple has been in existence for many years.

A Brief History:

The origins of the temple took root in 1999, in a small house on 114-37 Lefferts Blvd. Sunanda Dasa had a dream of Srila Prabhupada in large pandal tent in India. In the dream, before thousands of people, Srila Prabhupada called Sunanda to sit next to him, and said, “Your father who passed away, I’ll take him to vaikuntha; but you open one temple in New York, and it will be very pleasing to me.” With the blessings of His Grace Ravinda Swarupa Dasa, in 1999, Sunanda left his book distribution service at the Philadelphia temple to establish a Hare Krishna devotee community in Queens, New

York. Previously known as the Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mandir, the Sri Sri Krishna Balaram Mandir now flourishes with a vibrant and active devotee community.

May 27, 2006

Hare Krishna Maharajas, and Prabhus.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada. Please accept our humble obeisances. We the members of the Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mandir of Queens, New York are pleased to share the darshan of the largest Krishna Balarama Deities in North America with the community of devotees and well wishers. By their Own mercy, Their Lordships have manifested themselves and we feel obliged to accept Their blessings, and humbly extend it to everyone. These Deities are the same size as Sri Sri Krishna Balarama of Vrndavana, India. This Mandir is an affiliate of ISKCON, and is run by HG Sunanda das (disciple of HG Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu). This endeavor has the full blessings of HH Romapada Swami, and HG Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu.

The Deities of Sri Sri Krishna-Balarama were installed in August 13, 2006 by ISKCON GBC and initiating Guru His Grace Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu. They are one of the largest Krishna Balarama deities in North America, given the names Sri Sri Hari-Haladhari. Yearly there is a Maha Balarama Purnima Festival along with our annual Krishna Balarama Ratha Yatra and a number of other regular events and festivals.

Krishna Balarama Deities Installed in Queens, New York

by Mithuna das and Bhakta Nicholas Jinkhoo
Posted September 21, 2006

August 13 at the archa vigraha installation of Sri Sri Krishna Balarama at the SKC Mandir, Queens, New York, Sri Sri Krishna Balarama took Their places on a beautiful vedic-styled altar.

The atmosphere at the temple was joyful as devotees and well-wishers completed preparations right up to the actual ceremony. By 6:00 p.m., nearly 100 devotees in kirtan led by Keshava



Acarya das from the 26 Second Avenue temple filled the temple hall. At the same time, 75 persons stood outside the temple; anxious mothers could be seen pacing back and forth, pacifying babies. Not being able to find accommodation in the relatively small temple hall, perhaps 50 of the arriving guests actually left before the program got underway.

At 6:30 p.m., Maheshvara das from Pennsylvania added final touches to the sacrificial fire. As he started the ceremony, GBC member and officiating purohit Ravindra Svarupa prabhu praised the kirtan; he mentioned that Srila Prabhupada had said that the deities are really installed by kirtan, and not by the actual rituals. In tilak and vaisnava attire, devotees echoed the Vedic mantras chanted by the purohit, invoking memories of the great sages who once assembled at Naimisaranya. As the agnihotra ended and the screen was removed from the Deities, a moment of silence was swiftly shattered by the consummate beauty of the black, iron-like Krishna and His radiantly white brother Balarama. Devotees immediately paid obeisances amidst loud cries of: "Sri Sri Krishna Balarama ki jaya; Srila Prabhupada ki jaya; Haribol!"

As a part of the Mahaabhishek ceremony, Their Lordships were bathed with panchamrta and other sacred substances. After Their baths, the two Lords were again screened off and attended to by the officiating purohit, his assistant and the resident brahmanas. Waiting upon Their Lordships with ecstatic kirtan, the devotees from Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandir (Brooklyn), Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mandir (Queens) and Bhaktivedanta Ashram (26 second Avenue, Manhattan) bonded in wondrous camaraderie. They danced as if there was no tomorrow, externally reminiscent of Vakreshwar Pandit's 72 hours of non-stop dancing during Chaitanya-Lila. Apart from the officiating purohit and his assistant, other disciples of His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada present were HH Chandrasekhar Maharaja, Maheshvara das from New York, Bushara das and Saudamani dasi prabhus.

In the midst of the roaring kirtan, Ravindra Svarupa das emerged from behind the screen. Formally introducing Krishna and Balarama, he said: "They are Krishna and Balarama, but here in Queens Their names will be Sri Sri Hari Haladhari." In immediate response and in unison, the crowd of devotees cried out: "Haribol, Haribol." The purohit continued: "Hari means one who takes away everything inauspicious, and Haladhari means He who holds the plough; one function of the plough is to uproot the weeds of devotional service." As the transcendental conch echoed the length and breadth of the temple hall, there in all Their Majesty stood the astoundingly beautiful Sri Sri Hari Haladhari. Again, the devotees paid obeisances, crying out: "Sri Sri Hari Haladhari ki jaya!"

Bedecked in peacock feather, glittering jewels and fine garments, Lord Hari glanced upon the devotees. The equally attractive and beautifully dressed Lord Haladhari stood cross legged, resting His transcendental arm on the right shoulder of His younger brother; in His other hand, He held a golden plough. With gorgeous lotus eyes He, too, mercifully glanced upon the assembled devotees. The dressing of Their Lordships for Their first public darshan was the commendable service of Ghandarvika dasi prabhu. Special

recognition also goes to Sunanda das and Trishakti dasi prabhus for bringing Sri Sri Hari Haladhari to Queens, New York. Temple president Sunanda das offered the first arati to Their Lordships as the devotees danced about. Lights flashed almost continuously from digital cameras as photographers tried to capture the joyful moments.

At 10:30 p.m., a sumptuous prasadam feast was distributed to the nearly 300 persons present. At 11:30 p.m., some 70 devotees were still in front of the temple premises discussing the wonderful program and other topics about Krishna. Few of them seem to be interested in going home.

During His discourse, Ravindra Svarupa prabhu had mentioned that in the conditioned state, we cannot see spirit, therefore the Lord mercifully descends in a concrete and apparently helpless form. This Deity form offers us the opportunity to bathe, clothe, maintain and feed the Lord, to offer articles and prayers, to have darshan, to sing and dance for the Lord, as well as to encourage the community to do the same. In this way our senses become purified, and we are able to enter into a deeper relationship with the Holy Name. This Holy Name is non-different from Krishna, and when we acquire the suitable adhikar, The Lord will reveal that Rupa, Guna and Lila are non-different from this Sri Nama.

Now that Sri Sri Hari Haladhari is here in Queens, They will be worshipped according to the standard of Deity worship indicated in the Pancaratra Pradipa. All devotees are invited to visit our temple and take the darshan of Sri Sri Hari Haladhari. ISKCON preachers who schedule in advance with the temple president can give lectures at our Sunday feasts (5:30 p.m.) and other programs. The Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mandir is 25 minutes from La Guardia Airport and 15 minutes from John F. Kennedy Airports. The address is 111-14 101 Avenue, South Richmond Hill, New York 11419.

Monsoon Parade – Queens

By: Ravindra Svarupa Dasa for So It Happens on Aug. 8, 2009

The consolidated city of New York comprises five boroughs (each a county): Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, The Bronx, and Staten Island. Among these, the borough of Queens is blessed with The Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandir, which stands in the neighborhood of Richmond Hill.

“Queens County,” we learn, “is one of the most ethnically diverse areas on earth. There are over 130 different languages spoken by its citizens, and in many neighborhoods hearing English is rare.” Richmond Hill is home to many Hindu temples, Muslim mosques, and Sikh gurdwaras that minister to the local, twice-exiled Indian communities from Caribbean lands like Trinidad, Guyana, and Suriname.

On August 2nd, a warm but stormy Sunday, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma (Śrī Śrī Hari-Haladhārī) went out on a parade through Richmond Hill. Outside the temple at 111-14 101 Ave., devotees chanted as Hari-Haladhārī were escorted from their altar to the van that would convey them to their chariot:



Sunanda Dāsa, the temple president, playing drum, leads kīrtana



Maheśvara Dāsa, assisted by Nityānanda Dāsa, carries Balarāma from temple to the waiting van.



Maheśvara holds The Holder of the Plow (Haladhārī)



Balarāma in van, cradled by Bhūṣāra Dāsa

For the record, our taking out large marble Deities on parade created some controversy. When the idea of this parade first occurred to Sunanda, he called to ask me, his spiritual master, whether it could be done. Was it bona fide? At once I answered “yes,” and then I recounted a conversation I had in 1974 with Śrīla Prabhupāda himself on this very topic.

That year, I talked with Prabhupāda in his quarters in New Vṛndāvana and gave him an account of our recent Philadelphia Rathayātrā, with the largest cart ever.

Prabhupāda's response was enthusiastic. He extolled such parades as extremely important. The Deities, he said, can be taken out on parade four times a year. He mentioned Janmāṣṭamī as one such occasion. "Oh, Lord Jagannātha will go out then, too?" I asked. "No," said Prabhupāda. "Not Jagannātha. Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa."

Surprised, I exclaimed: "The big Deities?"

He paused a beat and said "Yes. They can go."

"Isn't that risky?" I asked.

"Just be careful." Prabhupāda answered.

He went on to say that when Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa come out in procession, the participants in front of the Deity car hold upraised poles or standards, made of silver or gold, surmounted by lion's heads.

Then, returning to the earlier topic about bringing out big marble Deities, he said that some temples had special replicas of the altar Deities just for going out of the temple for festivals. He called them "vijaya-vigraha."

But, he said again, the altar Deities themselves could be taken out, but one had to be very careful.

Having heard this from me, Sunanda went ahead with the festival plans. But soon, other ISKCON authorities registered objections to the marble Deities' being taken out. By that time, however, the plans and preparations were too far along to change. We understood the concern for the safety of the Deities and planned to have vijaya-vigraha for next year's festival.

In the meantime, we would take Prabhupāda's "just be careful" very seriously. That's why Sunanda and I were thankful for the help of Maheśvara—devout, highly experienced, and strong.



With the care of a mother for her baby, Mahesvara places Haladhari on the chariot



Kirtana before the parade starts

This year we've undergone a monsoon season in the northeast United States. The Rathayātrā in Purī also takes place during the rainy season.



Gaura Nitai

Gaura Nitāi led the procession. These are the Deities of Akhilānanda Dāsa. He also provided the chariot for Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma.



Getting ready



Setting off



Other divinities join the procession: Śiva, Hanumān, and Gaṇeśa



Bearing the Lion-headed standard



“Singin’ in the rain”



More “Singin’ in the rain”



Proceeding on roads first washed clean by Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma



Akhilānanda adds brass



Devotees of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa come out to see the mobile Lords



Residents along the way bring offerings for the Deities and distribute prasada to the celebrants



A joyous conclusion



Krishna and Balarama return safely to their altar.

New York (Queens) - Sri Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir

Last updated 2nd September 2013

Sri Sri Hari Haladhari are the first Lord Krishna and Lord Balarama deities to be installed in the United States since August 13, 2006.

They were installed by ISKCON GBC and initiating Guru His Grace Ravindra Svarupa Das.

Every year since 2009, the Sri Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir (of Queens, New York) hosts a yearly Ratha Yatra parade.

To learn more about our Hare Krishna center, please visit our websites:

<http://www.krishnabalaramnyc.com/>

<http://www.facebook.com/harihaladhari>









Ratha Yatra Parade in Queens on August 30
August 18, 2015

A Ratha Yatra Parade ahead of upcoming Krishna Janmashtami festival is scheduled for Sunday, August 30, 2015 in South Richmond Hill, NY.



Ratha Yatra Parade 2014

Organized by Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir, the Ratha Yatra Parade is scheduled to start at 12PM.

Ratha Yatra Parade – Details

Starts at 12PM Corner of Liberty Avenue and 123rd Street.

Will continue all the way and end at Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir @ 111-14 101 Avenue in South Richmond Hill, NY.

If you plan on attending Ratha Yatra Parade, make sure to visit Govinda's Vegetarian Grill in Sri Krishna Balaram Mandir for a hearty prasadam meal.

That is just a small sampling of the years of transcendental activities of Sri Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir.

Now I want to offer my own recent experiences at the Mandir. Let me start with Lord Nrsimhadeva's Appearance day on May 20, 2016. It began with bhajans. Devotees took turns leading the chanting of the holy names – *HARE KRSNA HARE KRSNA KRSNA KRSNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE*.

Following bhajans there was a lecture given by his grace Laxmi-Nrsimha dasa. In place of Jaya Radha Madhava, Laxmi-Nrsimha prabhu led everyone in chanting *om namo bhagavate narasimhaya* – the beginning portion of the Srimad-Bhagavatam verse, Canto 5, Chapter 18, Text 8 –

*om namo bhagavate narasimhaya namas tejas-tejase avir-avirbhava
vajra-nakha vajra-damstra karmasayan randhaya randhaya tamo grasa
grasa om svaha. abhayam abhayam atmani bhuyistha om ksraum.*

Translation

I offer my respectful obeisances unto Lord Nrsimhadeva, the source of all power. O my Lord who possesses nails and teeth just like thunderbolts, kindly vanquish our demonlike desires for fruitive activity in this material world. Please appear in our hearts and drive

away our ignorance so that by Your mercy we may become fearless in the struggle for existence in this material world.

A very small portion of the lecture –

What is the demon in our hearts that is obstructing us from engaging in devotional service in its pure form? It is pride. Hiranyakasipu is the personification of pride.

Lord Caitanya states that humility is required to chant the Hare Krsna Maha-mantra incessantly. It is the very first quality mentioned by Lord Caitanya necessary to chant the holy names. Humility is the opposite of pride.

*trnad api sunicena
taror api sahisnuna
amanina manadena
kirtaniya sada harih*

One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and should be ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly. *Sri Sri Siksastaka, Verse 3.*

A potent way of removing the obstacle of pride which may be in one's heart, and enable one to chant the holy name in a humble state of mind, is to chant and remember this mantra or prayer to Lord Nrsimhadeva, the destroyer of the personification of pride.

After the lecture there was a wonderful abhisheka (transcendental bathing) of the Deity of Lord Narasingha and a Sandhya-arati kirtana wherein the Gaura-arati prayers were chanted by all the devotees.

*(kiba) jaya jaya gauracander aratiko sobha
jahnavi-tata-vane jaga-mana-lobha*

All glories, all glories to the beautiful arati ceremony of Lord Caitanya. This Gaura-arati is taking place in a grove on the banks of the Jahnavi [Ganges] and is attracting the minds of all living entities.

That was followed by Srila Prabhupada Pranati mantra, the Panca-tattva Maha-mantra and the Hare Krsna Maha-mantra.

Here one “master of the senses” (Who shall remain anonymous.) may want to put his hands over his ears and eyes so he won’t lose control of his senses and become disturbed and possibly commit Vaisnava aparadha and complain “What the hell is that!” I thought a devotee, what to speak of a swami or goswami, was dhira or undisturbed?

We all chanted Jaya Prabhupada, Jaya Prabhupada, Jaya Prabhupada, Jaya Prabhupada, many times over, while jumping up and down with our arms raised up to the sky, even though the majority of us are not diksa disciples of Srila Prabhupada. We know who gave us this process of sadhana bhakti, which we were happily engaging in, and we know how to properly show our love for and indebtedness to, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.

The evening's festivities concluded with a sumptuous prasadam feast.

The following Sunday I attended the Free Sunday Love Feast program. Activities began with bhajans. That was followed by Tulasi-arati and Guru-puja for Srila Prabhupada. And yes, we all chanted Jaya Prabhupada over and over again. And no one got a headache.

After Guru-puja all the devotees sat in the temple room and chanted a round of japa. We all chanted the Maha-mantra in unison – *HARE KRSNA HARE KRSNA KRSNA KRSNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE*.

After the congregational japa period the altar curtains opened and Their Lordships Sri Sri Hari-Haladhari blessed us with their darshan. The evening program continued following the proper ISKCON standard with Sandhya-arati, Prema-dhvani and Nrsimha Prayers.

His grace Kardama Muni dasa gave the Bhagavad Gita class.

During the lecture a guest spoke out loud more than once. The guest repeated the words “Om Shalom” and “As-Salaam-Alaikum” a few times, slightly interrupting the class. Here are the simplest interpretations of those sound vibrations.

Om - The impersonal sound of Krsna is om, but the sound Hare Krsna contains om. (Bhagavad-gita, As It Is, Chapter 8, Text 13, purport)

In Hebrew, the meaning of Shalom is “Peace and Wholeness.”

"As-Salaam-Alaikum," is an Arabic greeting meaning "Peace be unto you."

I remember this same guest visited the Brooklyn temple for the Sunday evening program in the very recent past and did the same thing in the middle of the Bhagavad Gita lecture. In Brooklyn the guest was immediately removed from the temple room and escorted out of the building.

In Queens there was a more tolerant response. Here is an example of practical application of the theme from part of the lecture on Lord Nrsimha's appearance day from the week prior. Lord Caitanya says one should be more tolerant than a tree. There was no expulsion of the guest. The speaker paused a moment and continued with the class. The guest was quiet for the remainder of the lecture. Afterwards some of the devotees even engaged the guest in chanting “Sita Rama.” The evening concluded with a delicious prasadam feast.

Those were the two recent evenings that I spent in the association of the Vaisnavas of Sri Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir. As you can see from the many photos and testimonies submitted herein, this temple is a very nice peaceful place for Vaisnava association.

In the near future there are some events taking place. On June 18 there is a bus trip to New Jersey to visit a Vaisnava temple there. On July 15 there is a bus trip to New Vrndavan, West Virginia. There is the Maha Balarama Purnima Festival on August 18 and the Krishna Balarama Ratha Yatra Parade which will be announced in the future. Every Sunday there is the Free Sunday Love Feast. There is also a weekly food-for-life prasadam distribution program and a weekly harinama.

For more information everyone interested can visit their website:

www.krishnabalaramanyc.com.

Speaking of the future. Everyone in New York and probably in North America and beyond knows something of the situation in the Brooklyn temple. The powers that be are trying to sell the property while the majority of the congregation members are against the sale.

I gave my word to Sunandana prabhu that I would not criticize devotees. All I will say is that some of the same forces behind the sale of the Brooklyn temple are apparently trying to take control of Sri Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir and also trying to stop the annual Krishna Balarama Ratha Yatra. I have to ask myself why? Why would apparent millionaire renunciates, who fly first class around the world, who own many properties and bulging bank accounts, want this humble little temple?

Some possible reasons I can think of are greed, and envy, and an all-consuming desire for power and control. Those are strictly my words and thoughts. I am cynical. It is unfortunate that those who present themselves as devotees could act this way toward anyone, what to speak of a community of humble Vaisnavas.

The situation reminds me of the Christmas movie classic "It's a Wonderful Life" and the conflict between the crippled in body and soul, the wealthy Mr. Potter (As in Potter's field aka a cemetery) and George Bailey, the unsung hero of the common man who runs the Bailey Building & Loan, which single handedly is building homes, without personal material profit, for his less fortunate neighbors. Mr. Potter, who owns almost everything in town except the Bailey Building & Loan, wants to dissolve it after the passing away of the founder, George Bailey's father. George Bailey is inspired to speak before the board of directors against Mr. Potter and a part of it goes like this:

George Bailey: "Why he (George Bailey's father) ever started this Building & Loan I'll never know, but neither you (Mr. Potter) nor anyone else can say anything against his character. People were human beings to him, but to you, a warped frustrated old man, they're cattle. Well, in my book, he died a much richer man than you'll ever be.

Mr. Potter: "I'm not interested in your book. I'm talking about the Building & Loan."

George Bailey: “I know very well what you’re talking about. You’re talking about something you can’t get your fingers on. And it’s galling you.”

Further on in the movie, the lost soul Mr. Potter takes advantage of a mistake by someone in the Building & Loan and steals their money causing George Bailey to contemplate suicide in the foolish belief that he is worth more dead than alive. He then wishes that he were never born. Long story short, an angel, second class, visits and shows him the fate of his community if he had never been born. In the end, George Bailey’s faith is renewed, the community rallies around him and more than replaces the lost money, the Building & Loan is saved, and the second class angel gets his wings.

That is a typical Hollywood ending and has little to do with reality. Real life goes on. I don’t expect any angels to intercede here. But you never know. Even a cynic like me still has a smidgen of faith in the possibility of miracles.

Members of the community in Queens are also members of the community in Brooklyn. I have seen many of the same devotees over the years in both temples. They see the practical example in Brooklyn of how there is no input from the congregation, no transparency in temple finances and no freedom of Vaisnava speech or debate. Only a select few “devotees” are allowed to lead kirtana or give class and the temple president does not even participate in the morning program. He does not even speak to anyone at the Sunday program. That is what will become the norm in Queens. There is also the distinct possibility, as in Brooklyn, that the material value of the real estate will outweigh the transcendental value of a temple of Krsna in the minds of the “authorities”.

Perhaps the Vaisnavas of both congregations could come together in some way and find a solution for both unfortunate situations.

I know that Sunandana dasa prabhu does not in any way see himself as any type of hero. However, he has served Guru and Gauranga selflessly and without any desire for material gain or profit, for decades. He has, with the assistance of the congregation, maintained this humble temple in Richmond Hill, Queens for many years. He has successfully served the Vaisnavas and Srila Prabhupada and Their Lordships Sri Sri Hari-Haladhari for decades. What more can he do?

“So everything can be attained very nicely and easily simply by this sadhu-sanga. Sadhu-sanga [Cc. Madhya 22.83]. Therefore we repeatedly say that we are trying to create some sadhu so that in different parts of the world they will preach Krsna consciousness, and people will be able to associate with them, and they will become purified. This is Krsna consciousness movement, that sadhu-sanga... Especially in this age, the human society is in great danger. They do not care what is next. But there is next life. We get it, information, from Krsna: tatha dehantara-praptih [Bg. 2.13]. Dehantara-praptih there is. How you can deny it? The authority says. And we have got experience also. We are having dehantara from boyhood to childhood, from childhood to boyhood, from boyhood to youthhood. In this way, we have changed so many bodies, dehantara. This is called

dehantara. Similarly, after death, there will be dehantara. It is very reasonable, but people do not believe it.

So this is our position, and the human life is the opportunity to stop this dehantara. And to stop this dehantara, that is the main business. And how it can be done? Simply by understanding Krsna. And how you can understand Krsna? Simply by association of the devotees. That's all. It is not very difficult... Therefore our mission is if we can create some sadhu and they distribute themselves all over the world... As Caitanya Mahaprabhu says,

prthivite ache yata nagaradi grama
sarvatra pracara haibe mora nama

He wants that in every village, every town of the whole world, there may be a center of Krsna consciousness so that people will take advantage of it and they will also become sadhu. This is the mission of Krsna consciousness.”

Excerpt from a lecture by
His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Founder Acarya of ISKCON
Srimad-Bhagavatam [Canto 3, Chapter 25, Text 24]
Bombay, November 24, 1974

That last sentence just quoted, by Srila Prabhupada, describes perfectly the mission of Sri Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir in Queens. If you are hungering for Lord Caitanya's mercy, otherwise known as Bhagavat prasadam, if you desire the association of humble servants of the servants of the servants of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, if your devotional creeper is parched and in need of spiritual watering, if you are dying of thirst in the desert of the material world, then I recommend that you go to this address – 111-14, 101 Avenue, South Richmond Hill, Queens, NY 11419.

There you will find a transcendental oasis filled with Vaisnava desire trees ready to accept you with open hearts, in the service of Srila Prabhupada and Sri Sri Hari-Haladhari, and are ready and able and more than willing to quench your spiritual thirst for sadhu sanga.

It is common knowledge among desert dwellers that when an ill wind blows the sand dunes shift and the oasis becomes covered and lost and the unfortunate living entities perish where previously there was life giving water.

Let us all pray to Lord Balarama for the strength to stop the ill winds trying to cover our Vaisnava oases with the materialistic sands of destruction.



Murti of His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada garlanded by His Grace Sunandana dasa.

For more information:

sunandanadas@hotmail.com

www.krishnabalaramanyc.com

www.krishnabalaramanyc.net

www.facebook.com/harihaladhari

1-917-604-1085

1-347-480-5357